

# Persistence and Change in the Governance of Post-Soviet Higher Education Systems

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# Research Questions

- 1. *How did the governance of higher education systems change during 25 years after the break-up of the Soviet Union?***
- 2. *How did global, regional, and national forces drive, impede, and shape these developments?***
- 3. *Is there convergence towards a “global model” of governance of HE systems? Is there a “Post-Soviet model” of higher education governance?***

# Scope and methodology of the study

## – Three countries

- Russia
- Moldova
- Kazakhstan

## – 25 years of transformation



1989 | 1991 | 1994 | 1997 | 2000 | 2003 | 2006 | 2009 | 2012 | 2015 | (2017)



# What did I look at?

## Instruments of Governance of Higher Education Systems

### 1. Quality Assurance

- *Use and type of Standards, Quality Assessment & Information Provision (Dill, 2010)*

### 2. Regulation of Access to Higher Education

- *Who controls admission? Centralized testing?*

### 3. Institutional Governance and University Autonomy

- *Election/Appointment of Rectors. Type of influence over rectors by colleagues, governance boards, by the state*
- *Organizational, personnel, financial autonomy*
- *Distribution of power within HEI, internal incentive systems*

### 4. Financing of HEIs

- *Sources and relative importance of income*
- *Mechanisms of distribution and resulting incentive structure for HEIs*

# Data sources

- **Data collection between 2015 and 2017**
- **Desk Research**
  - prior studies and academic research,
  - policy papers and
  - legal documents
- **Expert interviews** with former ministers, high-ranking government officials, (vice-)rectors, experts, and consultants
  - Moldova: 13 Interviews
  - Russia: 16 Interviews
  - Kazakhstan: 22 Interviews

*1. How did the governance of higher education systems change during 25 years after the break-up of the Soviet Union?*

# The Soviet Model of Governance: centralization and standardization



## Quality Assurance

- Professional qualification requirements and standard course programs
- State final certification of graduates
- Attestation by VAK



## Regulation of Access to Higher Education

- Number of study places defined by Gosplan
- Entrance examinations by HEIs for available study places



## Institutional Governance and University Autonomy

- Rectors appointed by Branch Ministries
- Strategy set by Ministry
- *Main task of rector:* Compliance with legal norms and implementation of Ministry plans and strategy



## Financing of HEIs

- Gosplan allocations based on common funding formula
- Standardized salaries
- Industry research contracts
- (Possibly additional funding from Branch ministry)

# The 1990ies and early 2000s: Common challenges, similar policy responses

## – **Quality Assurance**

- Recreation of state curricular standards + State licensing, attestation and accreditation
- Strongest state control in MD and KZ
- Early 2000s: Reforms of quality assurance under influence of Bologna Process

## – **Institutional governance**

- Less government control + hierarchical traditions + rectors control funding and conditions of employment → HEIs gain in autonomy from the state, rectors gain in power vis-à-vis academics
- Slowly expanding institutional autonomy → KZ: Privatization

## – **Regulation of access**

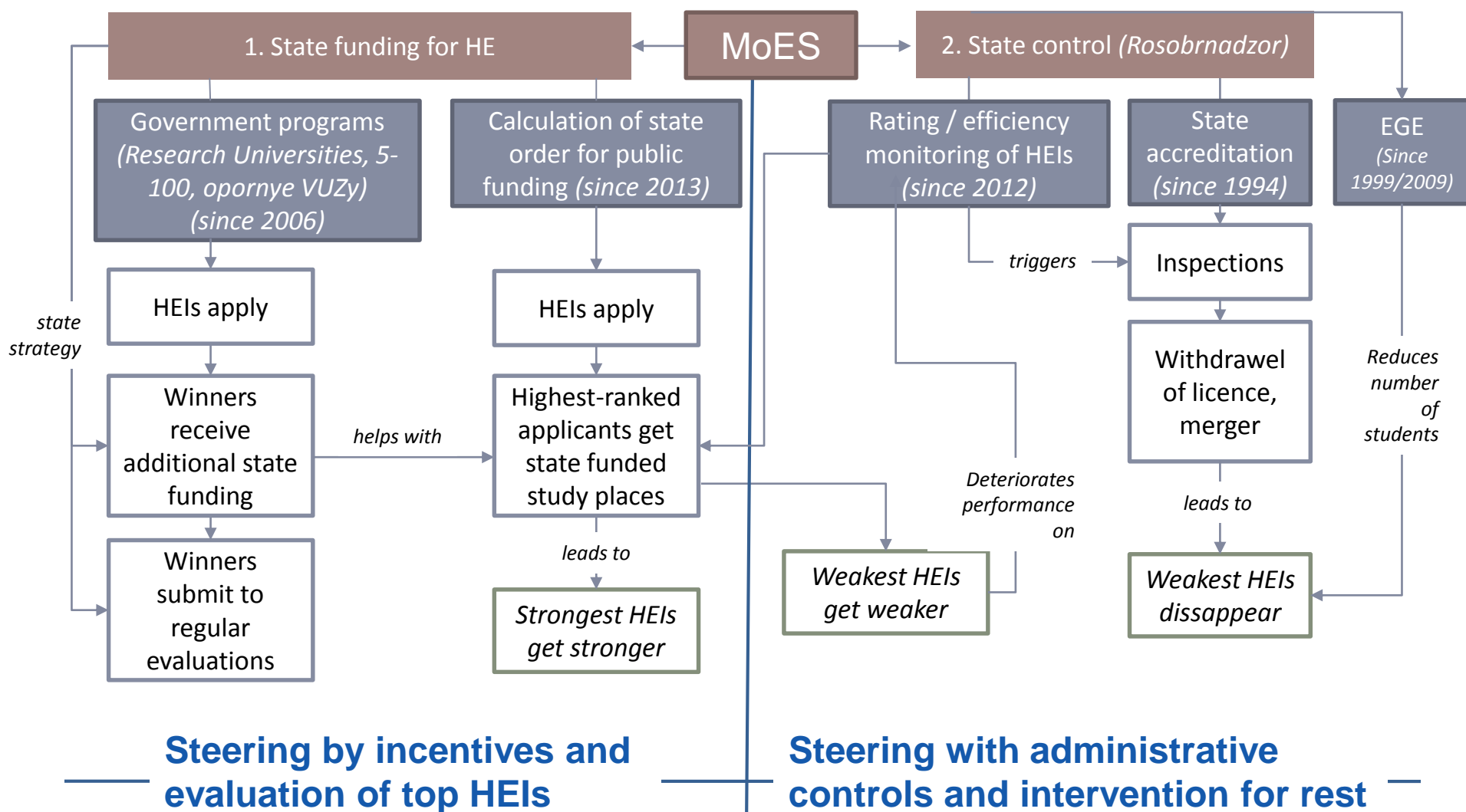
- Introduction of centralized testing and admittance

## – **Funding**

- Dual-track financing: tuition + government grants
- Money-follows students systems in KZ (1999) and RU (2002;2007)
- Renewed investment in top universities in RU and KZ starting from 2006



# Development of a dual-track system of governance





# Marketization and state-driven “Westernization” of governance practices

**Kazakhstan** has come to pursue a Western model of development by *importing, imitating and re-creating* Anglo-Saxon institutions in the Kazakh context via the authoritarian State

- Marketization:
  - Money-Follows-Students financing
  - Privatization of privatizations of state universities in 2001
- State-driven “Westernization”:
  - Strong involvement of the OECD in evaluating and advising higher education policy
  - Shift from state attestation to independent and international accreditation in quality assurance (2008/2011/2017)
  - Creation of Nazarbayev University as “Global” Research University with Western governance → “role model” and consultants for HEIs (2009)
  - Introduction of governance boards (2009/2012)
  - State-mandated creation of stakeholder organizations



## Orientation at European Institutions in Moldova

- Out of all three country cases, the governance of the Moldovan higher education system has comparatively changed the least
- Reforms often hampered by shifting political priorities and key personnel
- Since mid-2000s, the European Higher Education Area is the clear *model for reforms*, and reforms are often *instigated and financed* via EU projects
  - E.g. Quality Assurance: QUAEM
  - E.g. University autonomy, institutional governance, and financing: *ATHENA, EUniAM*
- Reforms often result in only small incremental change due to poly-centric actor arrangements of Academy of Sciences, HEI rectors, political parties, and EU

# Conclusions

2. Is there convergence towards common models of governance?
3. Which factors are driving change?

# There are clearly shared unique characteristics within the three Post-Soviet countries

## – **Quality Assurance**

- State curricular standards and state licensing
- Reforms of quality assurance under influence of Bologna Process

## – **Institutional governance**

- State claim to steer the system
- Hierarchical style of governance, management and leadership; little differentiation between governance & management; personalized accountability

## – **Regulation of access**

- Centralized state control over admission

## – **Funding**

- Dual-track financing of tuition + government grants
- Money-follows students systems in KZ and RU (planned in MD)

# Isomorphism is obvious...

The “Global Model” of HE governance, as promoted by OECD, WB and EU clearly left its traces in all case countries. On the instruments-level “surface”, it does look like a **process of convergence** is taking place:

## – **Quality Assurance**

- External evaluation and control of performance by accreditation; orientation at European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance

## – **Institutional governance**

- Expanding institutional autonomy
- Greater decision-making powers to HEI leadership
- Introduction of governance boards

## – **Funding**

- Diversified funding sources
- Competitive allocation of state funding

...but the same instruments have been promoted by different actors, with different motivations, and are resulting in different dynamics



In **Russia**, the state has highly re-centralized the HE system with a differentiated steering model using incentives for the top tier and control and sanctions for the lower tier. Institutional change is most visible at universities profiting from targeted financing programs (*FU, RU, 5-100, opornye VUZy*)  
→ **Government: retake the leading place in the world through government steering, using NPM steering practices**



In **Moldova**, in the past, state institutions have been too weak to steer effectively. Erratic policy changes make constant attention of HEI leaders to the ever-changing policy-environment indispensable. Rectors are trying to isolate against government influence by coordinating politically and maintain a certain stability of the legislative and policy environment. Institutional change is initiated and promoted mostly through EU projects. → **Rectors, politics, alliances of convenience: Survive the decline; profit from EU funds; join Europe**



In **Kazakhstan**, the government is pursuing a rapid modernization strategy based on OECD and World Bank recommendations: Marketization; State-mandated stakeholder involvement; authoritarian alignment of university development plans to state policy and strategy. Bolachak program, EU programs and Nazarbayev University's activities is becoming visible. → **Nazarbayev: Authoritarian reform program of imitating Anglo-Saxon practices in order to become part of the developed world**

# Thank you for your questions and feedback!

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